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C O N F I D E N T I A L ABU DHABI 000135

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DEPARTMENT FOR G/TIP, INL, DRL, L/DL, NEA/RA, AND NEA/ARP

E.O. 12958: 01/31/2018

TAGS: [PHUM](#) [ELAB](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KMPI](#) [AE](#)

SUBJECT: ABU DHABI TO OPEN SHELTER FOR TIP VICTIMS

REFS: A) 07 ABU DHABI 1891, B) 07 DUBAI 411, C) 06 ABU DHABI 4261

Classified by Charge d'Affaires Martin Quinn, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

Summary

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[¶1.](#) (U) The UAE National Committee to Combat Human Trafficking, in collaboration with the UAE Red Crescent Society, announced plans January 13 to open a shelter in Abu Dhabi to aid victims of human trafficking and exploitation. The projected opening of an Abu Dhabi shelter follows the 2007 opening of a shelter in Dubai. End summary.

Abu Dhabi Shelter

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[¶2.](#) (U) The UAEG announced plans January 13 to open a TIP victim shelter in Abu Dhabi through collaboration between the National Committee to Combat Human Trafficking (headed by Minister of State for Federal National Council Affairs Dr. Anwar Gargash and organized in 2007 to facilitate inter-agency coordination to counter TIP -- as well as raise public awareness and conduct training) and the UAE Red Crescent Society (a quasi-official humanitarian organization headed by Deputy Prime Minister Sheikh Hamdan Bin Zayed). The effort showcases the UAEG's public steps to address the TIP phenomenon and assist victims in Abu Dhabi. The shelter will purportedly provide a safe haven for women and children while administering healthcare, psychological counseling, and social support.

[¶3.](#) (U) Press statements note that the decision to open an Abu Dhabi shelter follows a study of best practices and international standards related to sheltering; the study was conducted by a special committee headed by the Red Crescent and the anti-TIP committee. The shelter will be run by a board of directors, assisted by a team of experts, and will be under the primary supervision of the Red Crescent Society.

Building on Dubai's shelter experience?

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[¶4.](#) (C) Announcement of an Abu Dhabi shelter was preceded by the opening of the Dubai Women and Children's Charity Foundation in 2007 which seeks to serve a similar function. It is difficult to confirm how effectively the Dubai shelter is fulfilling that role, amidst unsubstantiated reports of "a poor bedside manner" and lack of trained counselors. In a recent conversation, Sharla Musabih, a local human rights activist who serves on the board of directors of the Dubai shelter told PolOff the board does not hold meetings and the goals and activities of the shelter are not transparent. The establishment of the Dubai shelter is nonetheless a potential step in the right direction.

[¶5.](#) (SBU) For his part, Dr. Gargash cited the reasons to establish the shelter to be the UAE's strong commitment to combat the transnational crime of human trafficking. He focuses on the four major pillars of the UAE National Committee's strategy: 1) strengthening legislation, 2) enforcing laws and training law enforcement officials, 3)

providing support and protection to the victims, and 4) promoting bilateral and international cooperation.

Comment:

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¶6. (SBU) Shelter openings suggest a UAEG shift from previous resistance to shelters (in favor of providing other social services, such as victim hotlines), and indicate an ongoing UAE anti-TIP effort. With the creation of a TIP-specific Abu Dhabi shelter, in addition to the ongoing program in Dubai, the UAEG seeks to demonstrate a more comprehensive approach. Whether a shelter meets the needs of victims or satisfies standards of international "best practices," however, lies more in focused administration of a shelter than in its mere opening. Post will continue to press the UAEG to open and administer shelters effectively. End comment.

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